

THE STATE OF THE COUNTRY.

SPEECH
OF
WILLIAM H. SEWARD,
IN THE
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"Nature and Laws would be in an ill case if Slavery should find what to say for itself, and Liberty be mute; and if tyrants should find men to plead for them, and they that can waste and vanquish tyrants should not be able to find advocates."—MILTON.

MR. PRESIDENT:

The admission of Kansas into the Union, without further delay, seems to me equally necessary, just, and wise. In recorded debates I have already anticipated the arguments for this conclusion.

In coming forward among the political astrologers, it shall be an error of judgment, and not of disposition, if my interpretation of the feverish dreams which are disturbing the country shall tend to foment, rather than to allay, the national excitement. I shall say nothing unnecessarily of persons, because, in our system, the public welfare and happiness depend chiefly on institutions, and very little on men. I shall allude but briefly to incidental topics, because they are ephemeral, and because, even in the midst of appeals to passion and prejudice, it is always safe to submit solid truth to the deliberate consideration of an honest and enlightened people.

It will be an everflowing source of shame, as well as of sorrow, if we, thirty millions—Europeans by extraction, Americans

by birth or discipline, and Christians in faith, and meaning to be such in practice—cannot so combine prudence with humanity, in our conduct concerning the one disturbing subject of slavery, as not only to preserve our unequalled institutions of freedom, but also to enjoy their benefits with contentment and harmony.

Wherever a guiltless slave exists, be he Caucasian, American, Malay, or African, he is the subject of two distinct and opposite ideas—one that he is wrongly, the other that he is rightly a slave. The balance of numbers on either side, however great, never completely extinguishes this difference of opinion, for there are always some defenders of slavery outside, even if there are none inside of a free State, while also there are always outside, if there are not inside of every slave State, many who assert with Milton, that “no man who knows aught can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey.” It often, perhaps generally, happens, however, that in considering the subject of slavery, society seems to overlook the natural right, or personal interest of the slave himself, and to act exclusively for the welfare of the citizen. But this fact does not materially affect ultimate results, for the elementary question of the rightfulness or wrongfulness of slavery inheres in every form that discussion concerning it assumes. What is just to one class of men can never be injurious to any other; and what is unjust to any condition of persons in a State, is necessarily injurious in some degree to the whole community. An economical question early arises out of the subject of slavery—labor either of freemen or of slaves is the cardinal necessity of society. Some States choose the one kind, some the other. Hence, two municipal systems widely different arise. The slave State strikes down and affects to extinguish the personality of the laborer, not only as a member of the political body, but also as a parent, husband, child, neighbor, or friend. He thus becomes, in a political view, merely property, without moral capacity, and without domestic, moral, and social relations, duties, rights, and remedies—a chattel, an object of bargain, sale, gift, inheritance, or theft. His earnings are compensated and

his wrongs atoned, not to himself, but to his owner. The State protects not the slave as a man, but the capital of another man, which he represents. On the other hand, the State which rejects slavery encourages and animates and invigorates the laborer by maintaining and developing his natural personality in all the rights and faculties of manhood, and generally with the privileges of citizenship. In the one case capital invested in slaves becomes a great political force, while in the other, labor thus elevated and enfranchised, becomes the dominating political power. It thus happens that we may, for convenience sake, and not inaccurately, call slave States capital States, and free States labor States.

So soon as a State feels the impulses of commerce, or enterprise, or ambition, its citizens begin to study the effects of these systems of capital and labor respectively on its intelligence, its virtue, its tranquillity, its integrity, or unity, its defence, its prosperity, its liberty, its happiness, its aggrandizement, and its fame. In other words, the great question arises, whether slavery is a moral, social, and political good, or a moral, social, and political evil. This is the slavery question at home. But there is a mutual bond of amity and brotherhood between man and man throughout the world. Nations examine freely the political systems of each other, and of all preceding times, and accordingly as they approve or disapprove of the two systems of capital and labor respectively they sanction and prosecute, or condemn and prohibit, commerce in men. Thus, in one way or in another, the slavery question, which so many among us, who are more willing to rule than patient in studying the conditions of society, think is a merely accidental or unnecessary question that might and ought to be settled and dismissed at once, is, on the contrary, a world-wide and enduring subject of political consideration and civil administration. Men, states, and nations entertain it, not voluntarily, but because the progress of society continually brings it into their way. They divide upon it, not perversely, but because, owing to differences of constitution, condition, or circumstances, they cannot agree.

The fathers of the Republic encountered it. They even adjusted it so that it might have given us much less than our present disquiet, had not circumstances afterwards occurred which they,

wise as they were, had not clearly foreseen. Although they had inherited, yet they generally condemned the practice of slavery, and hoped for its discontinuance. They expressed this when they asserted in the Declaration of Independence, as a fundamental principle of American society, that all men are created equal, and have inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Each State, however, reserved to itself exclusive political power over the subject of slavery within its own borders. Nevertheless, it unavoidably presented itself in their consultations on a bond of Federal Union. The new Government was to be a representative one. Slaves were capital in some States, in others capital had no investments in labor. Should those slaves be represented as capital or as persons, taxed as capital or as persons, or should they not be represented or taxed at all? The fathers disagreed, debated long, and compromised at last. Each State, they determined, shall have two Senators in Congress. Three-fifths of the slaves shall be elsewhere represented, and be taxed as persons. What should be done if the slave should escape into a labor State? Should that State confess him to be a chattel, and restore him as such, or might it regard him as a person, and harbor and protect him as a man? They compromised again, and decided that no person held to labor or service in one State by the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall by any law or regulation of that State, be discharged from such labor or service, but shall be delivered up on claim to the person to whom such labor or service shall be due.

Free laborers would immigrate, and slaves might be imported into the States. The fathers agreed that Congress may establish uniform laws of naturalization, and it might prohibit the importation of persons after 1808. Communities in the Southwest, detached from the Southern States, were growing up, in the practice of slavery, to be capital States. New States would soon grow up in the Northwest, while as yet capital stood aloof, and labor had not lifted the axe to begin there its endless but beneficent task. The fathers authorized Congress to make all needful rules and regulations concerning the management and disposition of the public lands, and to admit new States. So the Constitution, while it does not disturb or affect the system

of capital in slaves, existing in any State under its own laws, does, at the same time, recognize every human being when within any exclusive sphere of Federal jurisdiction, not as capital but as a person.

What was the action of the fathers in Congress? They admitted the new States of the Southwest as capital States, because it was practically impossible to do otherwise, and by the ordinance of 1787, confirmed in 1789, they provided for the organization and admission of only labor States in the Northwest. They directed fugitives from service to be restored not as chattels, but as persons. They awarded naturalization to immigrant free laborers, and they prohibited the trade in African labor. This disposition of the whole subject was in harmony with the condition of society, and, in the main, with the spirit of the age. The seven Northern States contentedly became labor States by their own acts. The six Southern States, with equal tranquillity, and by their own determination, remained capital States.

The circumstances which the fathers did not clearly foresee were two, namely, the re-invigoration of slavery, consequent on the increased consumption of cotton, and the extension of the national domain across the Mississippi, and these occurred before 1820. The State of Louisiana, formed on a slave-holding French settlement, within the newly-acquired Louisianian Territory, had then already been admitted into the Union. There yet remained, however, a vast region, which included Arkansas and Missouri, together with the then unoccupied, and even unnamed, Kansas and Nebraska. Arkansas, a slaveholding community, was nearly ready to apply, and Missouri, another such Territory, was actually applying for admission into the Federal Union. The existing capital States seconded these applications, and claimed that the whole Louisianian Territory was rightfully open to slavery, and to the organization of future slave States. The labor States maintained that Congress had supreme legislative power within the domain, and could and ought to exclude slavery there. The question thus opened was one which related not at all to slavery in the existing capital States. It was purely and simply a national question whether the common interest of the whole Republic required that Arkansas, Missouri,

Kansas, and Nebraska, should become capital States, with all the evils and dangers of slavery, or be labor States, with all the security, benefits, and blessings of freedom. On the decision was suspended the question, as was thought, whether ultimately the interior of this new continent should be an asylum for the oppressed and the exile, coming year after year, and age after age, voluntarily from every other civilized land, as well as for the children of misfortune in our own, or whether, through the renewal of the African slave-trade, those magnificent and luxuriant regions should be surrendered to the control of capital, wringing out the fruits of the earth through the impoverishing toil of negro slaves. That question of 1820 was identically the question of 1860, so far as principle, and even the field of its application, was concerned. Every element of the controversy now present entered it then; the rightfulness or the wrongfulness of slavery; its effects, present and future; the constitutional authority of Congress; the claims of the States and of their citizens; the nature of the Federal Union, whether it is a compact between the States, or an independent Government; the springs of its powers, and the ligatures upon their exercise. All these were discussed with zeal and ability which have never been surpassed. History tells us, I know not how truly, that the Union reeled under the vehemence of that great debate. Patriotism took counsel from prudence, and enforced a settlement which has proved to be not a final one; and which, as is now seen, practically left open all the great political issues which were involved. Missouri and Arkansas were admitted as capital States, while labor obtained, as a reservation, the abridged, but yet comprehensive field of Kansas and Nebraska.

Now, when the present conditions of the various parts of the Louisianian Territory are observed, and we see that capital retains undisputed possession of what it then obtained, while labor is convulsing the country with so hard and so prolonged a struggle to regain the lost equivalent, which was then guaranteed to it under circumstances of so great solemnity, we may well desire not to be undeceived if the Missouri Compromise was indeed unnecessarily accepted by the free States, influenced by exaggerations of the dangers of disunion. The Missouri debate disclosed truths of great moment for ulterior use:

1st. That it is easy to combine the capital States in defence of even external interests, while it is hard to unite the labor States in a common policy.

2d. That the labor States have a natural loyalty to the Union, while the capital States have a natural facility for alarming that loyalty by threatening disunion.

3d. That the capital States do not practically distinguish between legitimate and constitutional resistance to the extension of slavery in the common territories of the Union, and unconstitutional aggression against slavery established by local laws in the capital States.

The early political parties were organized without reference to slavery. But since 1820, European questions have left us practically unconcerned. There has been a great increase of invention, mining, manufacture, and cultivation. Steam on land and on water has quickened commerce. The press and the telegraph have attained prodigious activity, and the social intercourse between the States and their citizens has been immeasurably augmented; and consequently their mutual relations affecting slavery have been, for many years, subjects of earnest and often excited discussion. It is in my way only to show how such disputes have operated on the course of political events, not to reopen them for argument here. There was a slave insurrection in Virginia. Virginia and Kentucky debated, and, to the great sorrow of the free States, rejected the system of voluntary labor. The Colonization Society was established with much favor in the capital States. Emancipation societies arose in the free States. South Carolina instituted proceedings to nullify obnoxious Federal revenue laws. The capital States complained of courts and legislatures in the labor States, for interpreting the constitutional provision for the surrender of fugitives from service so as to treat them as persons, and not property, and they discriminated against colored persons of the labor States, when they came to the capital States. They denied in Congress the right of petition, and embarrassed or denied freedom of debate on the subject of slavery. Presses, which undertook the defence of the labor system in the capital

States, were suppressed by violence and even in the labor States, public assemblies, convened to consider slavery questions, were dispersed by mobs sympathizing with the capital States.

The Whig party, being generally an opposition party, practised some forbearance toward the interest of labor. The Democratic party, not without demonstrations of dissent, was generally found sustaining the policy of capital. A disposition towards the removal of slavery from the presence of the national Capital appeared in the District of Columbia. Mr. Van Buren, a Democratic President, launched a prospective veto against the anticipated measure. A Democratic Congress brought Texas into the Union, stipulating practically for its future reorganization in four slave States. Mexico was incensed. War ensued. The labor States asked that the Mexican law of liberty, which covered the territories brought in by the treaty of peace, might remain and be confirmed. The Democratic party refused. The Missouri debate of 1820 recurred now, under circumstances of heat and excitement, in relation to these conquests. The defenders of labor took alarm lest the number of new capital States might become so great as to enable that class of States to dictate the whole policy of the Government; and in case of constitutional resistance, then to form a new slaveholding confederacy around the Gulf of Mexico. By this time, the capital States seemed to have become fixed in a determination that the Federal Government, and even the labor States, should recognize their slaves, though outside of the slave States, and within the territories of the United States, as property of which the master could not be in any way, or by any authority, divested; and the labor States, having become now more essentially Democratic than ever before, by reason of the great development of free labor, more firmly than ever insisted on the constitutional doctrine, that slaves voluntarily carried by their masters into the common territories or into labor States, are persons—men.

Under the auspicious influences of a Whig success, California and New Mexico appeared before Congress as labor States. The capital States refused to consent to their admission into the Union; and again threats of disunion carried terror and consternation throughout the land. Another compromise was made.

Specific enactments admitted California as a labor State, and remanded New Mexico and Utah to remain Territories, with the right to choose freedom or slavery when ripened into States, while they gave new remedies for the recaption of fugitives from service, and abolished the open slave-market in the District of Columbia. These new enactments, collated with the existing statutes, namely, the ordinance of 1787, the Missouri prohibitory law of 1820, and the articles of Texas annexation, disposed by law of the subject of slavery in all the Territories of the United States. And so the compromise of 1850 was pronounced a full, final, absolute, and comprehensive settlement of all existing and all possible disputes concerning slavery under the Federal authority. The two great parties, fearful for the Union, struck hands in making and in presenting this as an adjustment, never afterwards to be opened, disturbed, or even questioned, and the people accepted it by majorities unknown before. The new President, chosen over an illustrious rival, unequivocally on the ground of greater ability, even if not more reliable purpose, to maintain the new treaty inviolate, made haste to justify this expectation when Congress assembled. He said :

“ When the grave shall have closed over all who are now endeavoring to meet the obligations of duty, the year 1850 will be recurred to as a period filled with anxiety and apprehension. A successful war has just terminated ; peace brought with it a great augmentation of territory. Disturbing questions arose bearing upon the domestic institutions of a portion of the Confederacy, and involving the constitutional rights of the States. But, notwithstanding differences of opinion and sentiment, in relation to details and specific provisions, the acquiescence of distinguished citizens, whose devotion to the Union can never be doubted, has given renewed vigor to our institutions, and restored a sense of security and repose to the public mind throughout the Confederacy. That this repose is to suffer no shock during my official term, if I have the power to avert it, those who placed me here may be assured.”

Hardly, however, had these inspiring sounds died away, throughout a reassured and delighted land, before the national repose was shocked again—shocked, indeed, as it had never before been, and smitten this time by a blow from the very hand

that had just released the chords of the national harp from their utterance of that exalted symphony of peace.

Kansas and Nebraska, the long-devoted reservation of labor and freedom, saved in the agony of national fear in 1820, and saved again in the panic of 1850, were now to be opened by Congress, that the never-ending course of seed-time and harvest might begin. The slave capitalists of Missouri, from their own well-assured homes on the eastern banks of their noble river, looked down upon and coveted the fertile prairies of Kansas; while a sudden terror ran through all the capital States, when they saw a seeming certainty that at last a new labor State would be built on their western border, inevitably fraught, as they said, with a near or remote abolition of slavery. What could be done? Congress could hardly be expected to intervene directly for their safety so soon after the compromise of 1850. The labor hive of the free States was distant—the way new, unknown, and not without perils. Missouri was near and watchful, and held the keys of the gates of Kansas. She might seize the new and smiling Territory by surprise, if only Congress would remove the barrier established in 1820. The conjuncture was favorable. Clay and Webster, the distinguished citizens whose unquestionable devotion to the Union was manifested by their acquiescence in the compromise of 1850, had gone down already into their honored graves. The labor States had dismissed many of their representatives here for too great fidelity to freedom, and too great distrust of the efficacy of that new bond of peace, and had replaced them with partisans who were only timid, but not unwilling. The Democratic President and Congress hesitated, but not long. They revised the last great compromise, and found, with delighted surprise, that it was so far from confirming the law of freedom of 1820, that, on the other hand, it exactly provided for the abrogation of that venerated statute; nay, that the compromise itself actually killed the spirit of the Missouri law, and devolved on Congress the duty of removing the lifeless letter from the national code. The deed was done. The new enactment not only repealed the Missouri prohibition of slavery, but it pronounced the people of Kansas and Nebraska perfectly free to establish freedom or slavery, and pledged Congress to admit them in due time as

States, either of capital or of labor, into the Union. The Whig representatives of the capital States, in an hour of strange bewilderment, concurred; and the Whig party instantly went down, never to rise again. Democrats seceded, and stood aloof; the country was confounded; and, amid the perplexities of the hour, a Republican party was seen gathering itself together with much earnestness, but with little show of organization, to rescue, if it were not now too late, the cause of freedom and labor, so unexpectedly and grievously imperilled in the Territories of the United States.

I will not linger over the sequel. The popular sovereignty of Kansas proved to be the State sovereignty of Missouri, not only in the persons of the rulers, but even in the letter of an arbitrary and cruel code. The perfect freedom proved to be a hateful and intolerable bondage. From 1855 to 1860, Kansas, sustained and encouraged only by the Republican party, has been engaged in successive and ever-varying struggles, which have taxed all her virtue, wisdom, moderation, energies, and resources, and often even her physical strength and martial courage, to save herself from being betrayed into the Union as a slave State. Nebraska, though choosing freedom, is, through the direct exercise of the Executive power, over-riding her own will, held as a slave Territory; and New Mexico has relapsed voluntarily into the practice of slavery, from which she had redeemed herself while she yet remained a part of the Mexican Republic. Meantime the Democratic party, advancing from the ground of popular sovereignty as far as that ground is from the ordinance of 1787, now stands on the position that both territorial governments and Congress are incompetent to legislate against slavery in the Territories, while they are not only competent, but are obliged, when it is necessary, to legislate for its protection there.

In this new and extreme position the Democratic party now masks itself behind the battery of the Supreme Court, as if it were possibly a true construction of the Constitution, that the power of deciding practically forever between freedom and slavery in a portion of the continent far exceeding all that is yet organized, should be renounced by Congress, which alone possesses any legislative authority, and should be assumed and

exercised by a court which can only take cognizance of the great question collaterally, in a private action between individuals, and which action the Constitution will not suffer the court to entertain, if it involves twenty dollars of money, without the overruling intervention of a jury of twelve good and lawful men of the neighborhood where the litigation arises. The independent, ever-renewed, and ever-recurring representative Parliament, Diet, Congress, or Legislature, is the one chief, paramount, essential, indispensable institution in a Republic. Even liberty, guaranteed by organic law, yet if it be held by other tenure than the guardian care of such a representative popular assembly, is but precariously maintained, while slavery, enforced by an irresponsible judicial tribunal, is the completest possible development of despotism.

Mr. President, did ever the annals of any Government show a more rapid or more complete departure from the wisdom and virtue of its founders? Did ever the Government of a great empire, founded on the rights of human labor, slide away so fast and so far, and moor itself so tenaciously on the basis of capital, and that capital invested in laboring men? Did ever a free representative Legislature, invested with powers so great, and with the guardianship of rights so important, of trusts so sacred, of interests so precious, and of hopes at once so noble and so comprehensive, surrender and renounce them all so unnecessarily, so unwisely, so fatally, and so ingloriously? If it be true, as every instinct of our nature, and every precept of political experience teaches us, that

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay,"

then where in Ireland, in Italy, in Poland, or in Hungary, has any ruler prepared for a generous and confiding people disappointments, disasters, and calamities equal to those which the Government of the United States holds now suspended over so large a portion of the continent of North America?

Citizens of the United States, in the spirit of this policy, subverted the free Republic of Nicaragua, and opened it to slavery and the African slave-trade, and held it in that condition waiting annexation to the United States, until its sovereignty

was restored by a combination of sister Republics exposed to the same danger, and apprehensive of similar subversion. Other citizens re-opened the foreign slave-trade in violation of our laws and treaties; and, after a suspension of that shameful traffic for fifty years, savage Africans have been once more landed on our shores and distributed, unreclaimed and with impunity, among our plantations.

For this policy, so far as the Government has sanctioned it, the Democratic party avows itself responsible. Everywhere complaint against it is denounced, and its opponents proscribed. When Kansas was writhing under the wounds of incipient, servile war, because of her resistance, the Democratic press deridingly said, "let her bleed." Official integrity has been cause for rebuke and punishment, when it resisted frauds designed to promote the extension of slavery. Throughout the whole Republic there is not one known dissenter from that policy remaining in place, if within reach of the executive arm. Nor over the face of the whole world is there to be found one representative of our country who is not an apologist of the extension of slavery.

It is in America that these things have happened. In the nineteenth century, the era of the world's greatest progress, and while all nations but ourselves have been either abridging or altogether suppressing commerce in men; at the very moment when the Russian serf is emancipated, and the Georgian captive, the Nubian prisoner, and the Abyssinian savage are lifted up to freedom by the successor of Mohammed. The world, prepossessed in our behalf by our early devotion to the rights of human nature, as no nation ever before engaged its respect and sympathies, asks, in wonder and amazement, what all this demoralization means? It has an excuse better than the world can imagine, better than we are generally conscious of ourselves—a virtuous excuse. We have loved not freedom so much less, but the Union of our country so much more. We have been made to believe, from time to time, that, in a crisis, both of these precious institutions could not be saved together, and therefore, we have, from time to time, surrendered safeguards of freedom to propitiate the loyalty of capital, and stay its hands from doing violence to the Union. The true state of the case, however, ought not to be a mystery to ourselves. Prescience, in-

deed, is not given to statesmen; but we are without excuse when we fail to apprehend the logic of current events. Let parties, or the Government, choose or do what they may, the people of the United States do not prefer the wealth of the few to the liberty of the many, capital to labor, African slaves to white freemen, in the national territories and in future States. That question has never been distinctly recognized or acted on by them. The Republican party embodies the popular protest and reaction against a policy which has been fastened upon the nation by surprise, and which its reason and conscience, concurring with the reason and conscience of mankind, condemn.

The choice of the nation is now between the Democratic party and the Republican party. Its principles and policy are, therefore, justly and even necessarily examined. I know of only one policy which it has adopted or avowed, namely, the saving of the territories of the United States, if possible, by constitutional and lawful means, from being homes for slavery and polygamy. Who, that considers where this nation exists, of what races it is composed, in what age of the world it acts its part on the public stage, and what are its predominant institutions, customs, habits, and sentiments, doubts that the Republican party can and will, if unwaveringly faithful to that policy, and just and loyal in all beside, carry it into triumphal success? To doubt is to be uncertain whether civilization can improve or Christianity save mankind.

I may, perhaps, infer from the necessity of the case, that it will, in all courts and places, stand by the freedom of speech and of the press, and will maintain the constitutional rights of freemen everywhere; that it will favor the speedy improvement of the public domain by homestead laws, and will encourage mining, manufacture, and internal commerce, with needful connections between the Atlantic and Pacific States—for all these are important interests of freedom. For all the rest, the national emergencies, not individual influences, must determine, as society goes on, the policy and character of the Republican party. Already bearing its part in legislation and in treaties, it feels the necessity of being practical in its care of the national health and life, while it leaves metaphysical speculation to those whose duty it is to cultivate the ennobling science of political philosophy.

But in the midst of these subjects, or rather before fully reaching them, the Republican party encounters, unexpectedly, a new and potential issue—one prior, and therefore paramount to all others, one of national life and death. Just as if so much had not been already conceded—nay, just as if nothing at all had ever been conceded to the interest of capital invested in men, we hear menaces of disunion, louder, more distinct, more emphatic, than ever, with the condition annexed, that they shall be executed the moment that a Republican Administration, though constitutionally elected, shall assume the Government.

I do not certainly know that the people are prepared to call such an Administration to power. I know only, that through a succession of floods which never greatly excite, and ebbs which never entirely discourage me, the volume of Republicanism rises continually higher and higher. They are probably wise, whose apprehensions admonish them that it is already strong enough for effect.

Hitherto the Republican party has been content with one self-interrogatory—how many votes can it cast? These threats enforce another—has it determination enough to cast them? This latter question touches its spirit and pride. I am quite sure, however, that, as it has hitherto practised self-denial in so many other forms, it will in this emergency lay aside all impatience of temper, together with all ambition, and will consider these extraordinary declamations seriously and with a just moderation. It would be a waste of words to demonstrate that they are unconstitutional, and equally idle to show that the responsibility for disunion attempted or effected, must rest, not with those who, in the exercise of constitutional authority, maintain the Government, but with those who unconstitutionally engage in the mad work of subverting it.

What are the excuses for these menaces? They resolve themselves into this, that the Republican party in the North is hostile to the South. But it already is proved to be a majority in the North; it is therefore practically the people of the North. Will it not still be the same North that has forborne with you so long and conceded to you so much? Can you justly assume that affection which has been so complying, can all at once change to hatred intense and inexorable?

You say that the Republican party is a sectional one. Is the Democratic party less sectional? Is it easier for us to bear your sectional sway than for you to bear ours? Is it unreasonable that for once we should be alternate? But is the Republican party sectional? Not unless the Democratic party is. The Republican party prevails in the House of Representatives sometimes; the Democratic party in the Senate always. Which of the two is the most proscriptive? Come, come, come, if you will, into the free States, into the State of New York, anywhere from Lake Erie to Sag Harbor, among my neighbors in the Owasco Valley, hold your conventions, nominate your candidates, address the people, submit to them fully, earnestly, eloquently, all your complaints and grievances of northern disloyalty, oppression, perfidy; keep nothing back, speak just as freely and loudly there as you do here; you will have hospitable welcomes, and appreciating audiences, with ballot-boxes open for all the votes you can win. Are you less sectional than this? Extend to us the same privileges, and I will engage that you will very soon have in the South as many Republicans as we have Democrats in the North. (Applause.) There is, however, a better test of nationality than the accidental location of parties. Our policy of labor in the Territories was not sectional in the first forty years of the Republic. Its nature inheres. It will be national again, during the third forty years, and forever afterwards. It is not wise and beneficent for us alone or injurious to you alone. Its effects are equal, and the same for us all.

You accuse the Republican party of ulterior and secret designs. How can a party that counts its votes in this land of free speech and free press by the hundreds of thousands, have any secret designs? Who is the conjurer, and where are the hidden springs by which he can control its uncongregated and widely-dispersed masses, and direct them to objects unseen and purposes unavowed? But what are these hidden purposes? You name only one. That one is to introduce negro equality among you. Suppose we had the power to change your social system: what warrant have you for supposing that we should carry negro equality there? We know, and we will show you, if you will only give heed, that what our system of labor works out, wherever it works out anything, is the equality of

white men. The laborer in the free States, no matter how humble his occupation, is a white man, and he is politically the equal of his employer. Eighteen of our thirty-three States are free-labor States. They are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, California, and Oregon. I do not array them in contrast with the capital States. I am no assailant of States. All of the States are parcels of my own country—the best of them not so wise and great as I am sure it will hereafter be; the State least developed and perfected among them all is wiser and better than any foreign State I know. Is it then in any, and in which, of the States I have named that negro equality offends the white man's pride? Throughout the wide world, where is the State where class and caste are so utterly extinguished as they are in each and every one of them? Let the European immigrant, who avoids the African as if his skin exhaled contagion, answer. You find him always in the State where labor is ever free. Did Washington, Jefferson, and Henry, when they implored you to relinquish your system and accept the one we have adopted, propose to sink you down to the level of the African, or was it their desire to exalt all white men to a common political elevation?

But we do not seek to force, or even to intrude, our system on you. We are excluded justly, wisely, and contentedly, from all political power and responsibility in your capital States. You are sovereign on the subject of slavery within your own borders, as we are on the same subject within our borders. It is well and wisely so arranged. Use your authority to maintain what system you please. We are not distrustful of the result. We have wisely, as we think, exercised ours to protect and perfect the manhood of the members of the State. The whole sovereignty upon domestic concerns within the Union is divided between us by unmistakable boundaries. You have your fifteen distinct parts; we eighteen parts, equally distinct. Each must be maintained in order that the whole may be preserved. If ours shall be assailed, within or without, by any enemy, or for any cause, and we shall have need, we shall expect you to defend it. If yours shall be so assailed, in the emergency, no matter what the cause

or the pretext, or who the foe, we shall defend your sovereignty as the equivalent of our own. We cannot, indeed, accept your system of capital or its ethics. That would be to surrender and subvert our own, which we esteem to be better. Besides, if we could, what need for any division into States at all? You are equally at liberty to reject our system and its ethics, and to maintain the superiority of your own by all the forces of persuasion and argument. We must, indeed, mutually discuss both systems. All the world discusses all systems. Especially must we discuss them since we have to decide as a nation which of the two we ought to engraft on the new and future States growing up in the great public domain. Discussion, then, being unavoidable, what could be more wise than to conduct it with mutual toleration and in a fraternal spirit?

You complain that Republicans discourse too boldly and directly, when they express with confidence their belief that the system of labor will, in the end, be universally accepted by the capital States, acting for themselves, and in conformity with their own constitutions, while they sanction too unreservedly books designed to advocate emancipation. But surely you can hardly expect the Federal Government or the political parties of the nation to maintain a censorship of the press or of debate. Would you yourselves consent to the establishment of such a censorship as a permanent institution? The theory of our system is, that error of opinion may in all cases safely be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it. Will it be claimed that more of moderation and tenderness in debate are exhibited on your side of the great argument than on our own? We all learned our polemics, as well as our principles, from a common master. We are sure that we do not, on our side, exceed his lessons and example. Thomas Jefferson addressed Dr. Price, an Englishman, concerning his treatise on emancipation in America, in this fashion :

“Southward of the Chesapeake, your book will find but few readers concurring with it in sentiment on the subject of slavery. From the mouth to the head of the Chesapeake, the bulk of the people will approve it in theory, and it will find a respectable minority ready to adopt it in practice—a minority which, for weight, and worth of character, preponderates against the greater number who have not the courage to divest their families of a property which, however, keeps their consciences unquiet.

Northward of the Chesapeake, you may find here and there an opponent to your doctrine, as you may find here and there a robber or a murderer ; but in no greater number." * * *

" This (Virginia) is the next State to which we may turn our eyes for the interesting spectacle of justice in conflict with avarice and oppression—a conflict where the sacred side is gaining daily new recruits from the influx into office of young men, grown and growing up." * * * * *

" Be not, then, discouraged. What you have written will do a great deal of good ; and could you still trouble yourself about our welfare, no man is more able to help the laboring side."

You see, sir, that whether we go for or against slavery anywhere, we must follow Southern guides. You may change your pilots with the winds or the currents ; but we, whose nativity, reckoned under the North Star, has rendered us somewhat superstitious, must be excused for constancy in following the guidance of those who framed the national ship and gave us the chart for its noble voyage.

A profound respect and friendly regard for the Vice-President of the United States has induced me to weigh carefully the testimony he has given on the subject of the hostility against the South imputed to the Republican party, as derived from the relations of the representatives of the two parties at this capital. He says that he has seen here in the representatives of the lower Southern States a most resolute and earnest spirit of resistance to the Republican party ; that he perceives a sensible loss of that spirit of brotherhood and that feeling of loyalty, together with that love for a common country, which are at last the surest cement of the Union ; so that, in the present unhappy condition of affairs, he is almost tempted to exclaim that we are dissolving week by week and month by month ; that the threads are gradually fretting themselves asunder ; and a stranger might suppose that the Executive of the United States was the President of two hostile Republics. It is not for me to raise a doubt upon the correctness of this dark picture, so far as the Southern groups upon the canvas are concerned, but I must be indulged in the opinion that I can pronounce as accurately concerning the Northern or Republican representatives here as any one. I know their public haunts and their private ways. We are not a hostile Republic, or representatives of one. We con-

fer together, but only as the organs of every party do, and must do in a political system which obliges us to act sometimes as partisans, while it requires us always to be patriots and statesmen. Differences of opinion, even on the subject of slavery, with us are political, not social or personal, differences. There is not one disunionist or disloyalist among us all. We are altogether unconscious of any process of dissolution going on among us or around us. We have never been more patient, and never loved the representatives of other sections more than now. We bear the same testimony for the people around us here, who, though in the very center where the bolt of disunion must fall first and with most fearful effect, seemed never less disturbed than now. We bear the same testimony for all the districts and States we represent. The people of the North are not enemies, but friends and brethren of the South, faithful and true as in the days when Death has dealt his arrows promiscuously among them on common battle-fields of freedom.

We will not suffer ourselves here to dwell on any evidences of a different temper in the South; but we shall be content with expressing our belief that hostility that is not designedly provoked, and that cannot provoke retaliation, is an anomaly that must be traced to casual excitements, which cannot perpetuate alienation.

A canvass for a presidential election, in some respects more important, perhaps, than any since 1800, has recently begun. The House of Representatives was to be organized by a majority, while no party could cast more than a plurality of votes. The gloom of the late tragedy in Virginia rested on the Capitol from the day when Congress assembled. While the two great political parties were peacefully, lawfully, and constitutionally, though zealously, conducting the great national issue between free labor and capital labor for the Territories to its proper solution, through the trials of the ballot, operating directly or indirectly on the various departments of the Government, a band of exceptional men, contemptuous equally of that great question and of the parties to the controversy, and impatient of the constitutional system which confines the citizens of every State to political action by suffrage, in organized parties within their own borders, inspired by an enthusiasm peculiar to

themselves, and exasperated by grievances and wrongs that some of them had suffered by inroads of armed propagandists of slavery in Kansas, unlawful as their own retaliation was, attempted to subvert slavery in Virginia by conspiracy, ambush, invasion, and force. The method we have adopted, of appealing to the reason and judgment of the people, to be pronounced by suffrage, is the only one by which free government can be maintained anywhere, and the only one as yet devised which is in marked harmony with the spirit of the Christian religion. While generous and charitable natures will probably concede that John Brown and his associates acted on earnest though fatally erroneous convictions, yet all good citizens will nevertheless agree, that this attempt to execute an unlawful purpose in Virginia by invasion, involving servile war, was an act of sedition and treason, and criminal in just the extent that it affected the public peace and was destructive of human happiness and human life. It is a painful reflection that, after so long an experience of the beneficent working of our system as we have enjoyed, we have had these new illustrations in Kansas and Virginia of the existence among us of a class of men so misguided and so desperate as to seek to enforce their peculiar principles by the sword, drawing after it a need for the further illustration by their punishment of that great moral truth, especially applicable in a Republic, that they who take up the sword as a weapon of controversy shall perish by the sword. In the latter case, the lamented deaths of so many citizens, slain from an ambush and by surprise—all the more lamentable because they were innocent victims of a frenzy kindled without their agency, in far distant fires—the deaths even of the offenders themselves, pitiable, although necessary and just, because they acted under delirium, which blinded their judgments to the real nature of their criminal enterprise; the alarm and consternation naturally awakened throughout the country, exciting, for the moment, the fear that our whole system, with all its securities for life and liberty, was coming to an end—a fear none the more endurable because continually aggravated by new chimeras to which the great leading event lent an air of probability; surely all these constituted a sum of public misery, which ought to have satisfied the most morbid appetite for

social horrors. But, as in the case of the gunpowder plot, and the Salem witchcraft, and the New York colonial negro plot, so now; the original actors were swiftly followed by another and kindred class, who sought to prolong and widen the public distress by attempting to direct the indigation which it had excited against parties guiltless equally of complicity and of sympathy with the offenders.

Posterity will decide in all the recent cases where political responsibility for public disasters must fall; and posterity will give little heed to our interested instructions. It was not until the gloomy reign of Domitian had ended, and liberty and virtue had found assured refuge under the sway of the milder Nerva, that the historian arose whose narrative of that period of tyranny and terror has been accepted by mankind.

The Republican party being thus vindicated against the charge of hostility to the South, which has been offered in excuse for the menaces of unconstitutional resistance in the event of its success, I feel well assured that it will sustain me in meeting them in the spirit of the defender of the English Commonwealth:

“Surely they that shall boast as we do to be a free nation, and having the power, shall not also have the courage to remove, constitutionally, every Governor, whether he be the supreme or subordinate, may please their fancy with a ridiculous and painted freedom, fit to cozen babies, but are, indeed, under tyranny and servitude, as wanting that power, which is the root and source of all liberty, to dispose of and economize in the land which God hath given them, as members of family in their own home and free inheritance. Without which natural and essential power of a free nation, though bearing high their heads, they can, in due esteem, be thought no better than slaves and vassals born in the tenure and occupation of another inheriting lord, whose government, though not illegal or intolerable, hangs on them as a lordly scourge, not as a free government.”

The Republican party knows, as the whole country will ultimately come to understand, that the noblest objects of national life must perish, if that life itself shall be lost, and, therefore, it will accept the issue tendered. It will take up the word Union, which others are so willing to renounce, and, combining it with

that other glorious thought, Liberty, which has been its inspiration so long, it will move firmly onward, with the motto inscribed on its banner, "UNION and LIBERTY, come what may, in victory as in defeat, in power as out of power, now and for ever."

If the Republican party maintain the Union, who and what party is to assail it? Only the Democratic party, for there is no other. Will the Democratic party take up the assault? The menaces of disunion are made, though not in its name, yet in its behalf. It must avow or disavow them. Its silence, thus far, is portentous, but is not alarming. The effect of the intimidation, if successful, would be to continue the rule of the Democratic party, though a minority, by terror. It certainly ought to need no more than this to secure the success of the Republican party. If, indeed, the time has come when the Democratic party must rule by terror, instead of ruling through conceded public confidence, then it is quite certain that it cannot be dismissed from power too soon. Ruling on that odious principle, it could not long save either the Constitution or public liberty. But I shall not believe the Democratic party will consent to stand in this position, though it does, through the action of its representatives, seem to cover and sustain those who threaten disunion. I know the Democracy of the North. I know them now in their waning strength. I do not know a possible disunionist among them all. I believe they will be as faithful to the Union now as they were in the bygone days when their ranks were full, and their challenge to the combat was always the war-cry of victory. But, if it shall prove otherwise, then the world will all the sooner know that every party in this country must stand on Union ground; that the American people will sustain no party that is not capable of making a sacrifice of its ambition on the altar of the country; that although a party may have never so much of prestige, and never such traditional merit, yet, if it be lacking in the one virtue of loyalty to the Union, all its advantages will be unavailing; and then obnoxious as, through long-cherished and obstinate prejudices, the Republican party is in the capital States, yet even there it will advance like an army with banners, winning the favor of the whole people, and it will be armed with the na-

tional confidence and support, when it shall be found the only party that defends and maintains the integrity of the Union.

Those who seek to awaken the terrors of disunion seem to me to have too hastily considered the conditions under which they are to make their attempt. Who believes that a Republican administration and Congress could practice tyranny under a Constitution which interposes so many checks as ours? Yet that tyranny must not only be practised, but must be intolerable, and there must be no remaining hope for constitutional relief, before forcible resistance can find ground to stand on anywhere.

The people of the United States, acting in conformity with the Constitution, are the supreme tribunal to try and determine all political issues. They are as competent to decide the issues of to-day as they have been heretofore to decide the issues of other days. They can reconsider hereafter, and reverse, if need be, the judgment they shall pronounce to-day, as they have more than once reconsidered and reversed their judgments in former times. It needs no revolution to correct any error, or prevent any danger, under any circumstances.

Nor is any new or special cause for revolution likely to occur under a Republican administration. We are engaged in no new transaction, not even in a new dispute. Our fathers undertook a great work for themselves, for us, and for our successors—to erect a free and Federal empire, whose arches shall span the North American continent, and reflect the rays of the sun throughout his whole passage from the one to the other of the great oceans. They erected thirteen of its columns all at once. These are standing now, the admiration of mankind. Their successors added twenty more; even we who are here have shaped and elevated three of that twenty, and all these are as firm and steadfast as the first thirteen; and more will yet be necessary when we shall have rested from our labors. Some among us prefer for these columns a composite material; others the pure white marble. Our fathers and our predecessors differed in the same way, and on the same point. What execrations should we not all unite in pronouncing on any statesman who heretofore, from mere disappointment and disgust at being overruled in his choice of materials for any new column then

to be quarried, should have laid violent hands on the imperfect structure, and brought it down to the earth, there to remain a wreck, instead of a citadel of a world's best hopes!

I remain now in the opinion I have uniformly expressed here and elsewhere, that these hasty threats of disunion are so unnatural that they will find no hand to execute them. We are of one race, language, liberty, and faith; engaged, indeed, in varied industry; but even that industry, so diversified, brings us into more intimate relations with each other than any other people, however homogeneous, and though living under a consolidated Government, ever maintained. We languish throughout, if one joint of our Federal frame is smitten; while it is certain that a part dissevered must perish. You may refine as you please about the structure of the Government, and say that it is a compact, and that a breach, by one of the States or by Congress, of any one article, absolves all the members from allegiance, and that the States may separate when they have, or fancy they have, cause for war. But once try to subvert it, and you will find that it is a Government of the whole people—as individuals, as well as a compact of States; that every individual member of the body-politic is conscious of his interest and power in it, and knows that he will be helpless, powerless, hopeless, when it shall have gone down. Mankind have a natural right, a natural instinct, and a natural capacity for self-government; and when, as here, they are sufficiently ripened by culture, they will and must have self-government, and no other. The framers of our Constitution, with a wisdom that surpassed all previous understanding among men, adapted it to these inherent elements of human nature. He strangely, blindly misunderstands the anatomy of the great system who thinks that its only bonds, or even its strongest ligaments, are the written compact or even the multiplied and thoroughly ramified roads and thoroughfares of trade, commerce, and social intercourse. These are strong indeed, but its chiefest instruments of cohesion—those which render it inseparable and indivisible—are the millions of fibres of millions of contended, happy human hearts, binding by their affections, their ambitions, and their best hopes, equally the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the wise and the unwise, the learned and the untutored, even the good and the bad,

to a Government, the first, the last, and the only such one that has ever existed, which takes equal heed always of their wants, their wishes, and their opinions; and appeals to them all, individually, once in a year, or in two years, or at least in four years, for their expressed consent and renewal, without which it must cease. No; go where you will, and to what-class you may, with commissions for your fatal service in one hand, and your bounty counted by the hundred or the thousand pieces of silver in the other, a thousand resisters will rise up for every recruit you can engage. On the banks equally of the St. Lawrence and of the Rio Grande, on the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts, on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, and in the dells of the Rocky Mountains, among the fishermen on the Banks of Newfoundland, the weavers and spinners of Massachusetts, the stevedores of New York, the miners of Pennsylvania, Pike's Peak, and California, the wheat-growers of Indiana, the cotton and the sugar planters on the Mississippi, among the voluntary citizens from every other land, not less than the native born, the Christian, and the Jew, among the Indians on the prairies, the contumacious Mormons in Deseret, the Africans free, the Africans in bondage, the inmates of hospitals and alms-houses, and even the criminals in the penitentiaries, rehearse the story of your wrongs and their own, never so eloquently and never so mournfully, and appeal to them to rise. They will ask you, "Is this all?" "Are you more just than Washington, wiser than Hamilton, more humane than Jefferson?" "What new form of government or of union have you the power to establish, or even the cunning to devise, that will be more just, more safe, more free, more gentle, more beneficent, or more glorious than this?" And by these simple interrogatories you will be silenced and confounded.

Mr. President, we are perpetually forgetting this subtle and complex, yet obvious and natural mechanism of our Constitution; and because we do forget it, we are continually wondering how it is that a confederacy of thirty and more States, covering regions so vast, and regulating interests so various of so many millions of men, constituted and conditioned so diversely, works right on. We are continually looking to see it stop and stand still, or fall suddenly into pieces. But, in truth, it will

not stop ; it cannot stop ; it was made not to stop, but to keep in motion—in motion always, and without force. For my own part, as this wonderful machine, when it had newly come from the hands of its almost divine inventors, was the admiration of my earlier years, although it was then but imperfectly known abroad, so now, when it forms the central figure in the economy of the world's civilization, and the best sympathies of mankind favor its continuance, I expect that it will stand and work right on until men shall fear its failure no more than we now apprehend that the sun will cease to hold his eternal place in the heavens.

Nevertheless, I do not expect to see this purely popular though majestic system always working on unattended by the presence and exhibition of human temper and human passions. That would be to expect to enjoy rewards, benefits, and blessings, without labor, care, and watchfulness—an expectation contrary to divine appointment. These are the discipline of the American citizen, and he must inure himself to it. When, as now, a great policy, fastened upon the country through its doubts and fears, confirmed by its habits, and strengthened by personal interests and ambitions, is to be relaxed and changed, in order that the nation may have its just and natural, and free developments, then, indeed, all the winds of controversy are let loose upon us from all points of the political compass—we see objects and men only through mazes, mists, and doubtful and lurid lights. The earth seems to be heaving under our feet, and the pillars of the noble fabric that protects us to be trembling before our eyes. But the appointed end of all this agitation comes at last, and always seasonably ; the tumults of the people subside ; the country becomes calm once more ; and then we find that only our senses have been disturbed, and that they have betrayed us. The earth is firm as always before, and the wonderful structure, for whose safety we have feared so anxiously, now more firmly fixed than ever, still stands unmoved, enduring, and immovable.

